

§ 143B-135.256. Powers and duties of the Secretary.

The Secretary shall:

- (1) Establish by rule the criteria for selection, registration, and dedication of natural areas and nature preserves.
- (2) Cooperate or contract with any federal, State, or local government agency, private conservation organization, or person in carrying out the purposes of this Part.
- (3) Maintain a Natural Heritage Program to provide assistance in the selection and nomination for registration or dedication of natural areas. The Program shall include classification of natural heritage resources, an inventory of their locations, and a data bank for that information. The Program shall cooperate with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in the selection and nomination of areas that contain habitats for endangered and rare plant species, and shall cooperate with the Wildlife Resources Commission in the selection and nomination of areas that contain habitats for endangered and rare animal species. Information from the natural heritage data bank may be made available to public agencies and private persons for environmental assessment and land management purposes. Use of the inventory data for any purpose inconsistent with the Natural Heritage Program may not be authorized. The Program shall include other functions as may be assigned for registration, dedication, and protection of natural areas and nature preserves.
- (4) Prepare a Natural Heritage Plan that shall govern the Natural Heritage Program in the creation of a system of registered and dedicated natural areas.
- (5) Publish and disseminate information pertaining to natural areas and nature preserves within the State.
- (6) Appoint advisory committees composed of representatives of federal, State, and local governmental agencies, scientific and academic institutions, conservation organizations, and private business, to advise him on the identification, selection, registration, dedication, and protection of natural areas and nature preserves.
- (7) Submit to the Governor, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources, and the Fiscal Research Division a biennial report on or before February 15 of odd-numbered years describing the activities of the past biennium and plans for the coming biennium, and detailing specific recommendations for action that the Secretary deems necessary for the improvement of the Program. (1985, c. 216, s. 1; 1987, c. 827, s. 152; 1997-261, s. 82; 2015-241, s. 14.30(k2), (r2); 2017-57, s. 14.1(mm).)